

HUMANITIES AS POLITICS IN THE REAL WORLD

by
J. Jorge Klor de Alva

EDITOR'S NOTE This article is an edited version of J. Jorge Klor de Alva's address delivered during the Federation of State Humanities Councils annual conference in Washington, D.C. in early September. Dr. Klor de Alva is a member of the board of the California Council for the Humanities and is the Class of 1940 Professor of Comparative Ethnic Studies and Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

We invite your responses to this article. To post your queries and comments on the CCH website, see the instructions at the end of the article.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The following address draws freely from Mark Edmondson and Earl Shorris's separate essays "On the Uses of a Liberal Education," Harper's [September 1997], Earl Shorris's New American Blues: A Journey Through Poverty to Democracy forthcoming this Fall from W.W. Norton & Co., Martin L. Kempner's proposal for "Teaching the Humanities to Those Living in Poverty" [no date], and two unpublished letters appended to the proposal, one by former New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins [May 5, 1997] the other by Congressman Charles B. Rangel [April 17, 1997].)



J. Jorge Klor de Alva

The topic I speak about this morning is terribly personal and utterly public at once. Therefore, I must apologize from the outset for making my remarks more biographical than is my custom, especially since those familiar with me and my work know that I am not fond of arguing from either anecdote or autobiography. Still, taking a cue from the French critic and poet, Paul Valery, at the outset I confess my belief that theory is autobiography; as one's life unfolds, so does one's view of the world and therefore how one explains it. Existentialism, for instance, a philosophy still popu-

Packing tomato crates won't make you rich, and ideas do not require heavy lifting.

lar when I began to teach, was great for the young and the old, but useless during one's peak earning years. And, to quote the former Mexican President Diaz Ordaz – the one who in 1968 sent out the troops that killed dozens of protesting students in what is known as the Tlatelolco massacre – if the young aren't communist, they're heartless; if they're still communists in their thirties, they're fools.

From An Unexpected Corner

So it was that I fell in love with letters at a young age, not as an escape from bourgeois ennui – being neither middle class nor a bored youth disguising angst with an air of *sans souci* – but as a tactic in my inchoate but evolving strategy for success. I learned early enough a common immigrant's lesson: packing tomato crates won't make you rich and ideas do not require heavy lifting. The road out of the fields and, ultimately, out of the desert work sites where I spent much of my youth erecting water storage tanks, lay in figuring out how to transform my passion for ideas and the written word into both a lifestyle and a career. My big break came, as big breaks often do, from an unexpected corner. One day, while traveling in a car with my somewhat estranged father on our way to visit his mother and sister for my and my siblings' first time, our father proceeded to warn us not to ask for milk with our dinner and not to begin our meal by making the sign of the cross. Unbeknownst to him we neither drank milk with our meals nor did we ever say grace. But his request nonetheless stunned me. Why? I inquired angrily. Why should we avoid milk and hide the most important outward sign of our praying rituals? His surprising answer pointed me out of the world of manual labor and launched me on the trajectory of what became a career. Unthinkingly, he responded: because like me, they're Jewish.

Jewish? Growing up in postwar Mexico in a relatively strict Catho-

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In conjunction with the Council, Heyday books has just published an anthology of Gold Rush writings. Here are three brief excerpts.

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The 1998 conference will focus on the history and continuing impacts of the U.S. - Mexico war and the California Gold Rush. The public is cordially invited to attend.

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The California Council for the Humanities is a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Humanities Network is published quarterly and mailed to anyone who requests it from the San Francisco office.

The publication this month of *Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration* marks the start of the Council's three-year "Rediscovering California at 150" Sesquicentennial initiative. Between 1998 and 2000, the Council will create and fund hundreds of free public programs offering Californians opportunities to explore the history and continuing impacts of the events that led to California's birth as a state 150 years ago.



The Sesquicentennial Project
OF THE
California Council
for the Humanities

Inside this issue of *Humanities Network*, on pages two through five, you'll find information about some of our upcoming "Rediscovering California at 150" programs. You'll find additional details in future issues of the newsletter and on the Council's website (www.calhum.org). Look for the Council's "Rediscovering California at 150" logo, an indication of high-quality cultural programming, at sesquicentennial events in your community.

GOLD DISCOVERED!

NEW GOLD RUSH ANTHOLOGY WILL BE THE

From the moment gold was discovered on the American River in 1848 to the present day, the California Gold Rush – and its aftermath – has inspired writing that is provocative, lively, and remarkably diverse. To mine this rich literary vein, Heyday Books, in conjunction with the Council and its “Rediscovering California at 150” California Sesquicentennial initiative, has just published *Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration*.

The anthology contains more than 100 selections combining first-hand accounts of people who traveled from all over the world to seek their fortunes in California with stories, reminiscences and retrospective essays about the personal and historical impacts of the Gold Rush. The book is illustrated by more than 50 period photographs and drawings.

MARSHALL'S OWN ACCOUNT OF THE GOLD DISCOVERY

James W. Marshall (1810 - 1885), born in New Jersey, traversed the Oregon Trail by wagon train in 1844. After serving in the Bear Flag Revolt, Marshall agreed to build a small sawmill at Coloma for Swiss rancher John Sutter. On January 24, 1848, Marshall found a few small nuggets of gold in a riverbed – a discovery that had momentous effects on Marshall and indeed the world. During the gold rush, he was hounded by miners as a celebrity and a good luck charm; in later years he drank heavily, perhaps to escape his fame. He died bitter and impoverished in Coloma in 1885, not far from his famous discovery site. This account of the gold discovery, one of several given by Marshall, was allegedly the first.

IN MAY, 1847, WITH MY RIFLE, blanket, and a few crackers to eat with the venison (for the deer then were awful plenty), I ascended the American River, according to Mr. Sutter's wish, as he wanted to find a good site for a saw-mill, where we could have plenty of timber, and where wagons would be able to ascend and descend the river hills. Many fellows had been out before me, but they could not find any place to suit; so when I left I told Mr. Sutter I would go along the river to its very head and find the place, if such a place existed anywhere upon the river or any of its forks. I traveled along the river the whole way. Many places would suit very well for the erection of the mill, with plenty of timber everywhere, but then nothing but a mule could climb the hills; and when I would find a spot where the hills were not steep, there was no timber to be had; and so it was until I had been out several days and reached this place, which, after first sight, looked like the exact spot we were hunting.

You may be sure Mr. Sutter was pleased when I reported my success. We entered into partnership; I was to build the mill, and he was to find provisions, teams, tools, and to pay a portion of the men's wages. I believe I was at that time the only millwright in the whole country. In August, everything being ready, we freighted two wagons with tools and provisions, and accompanied by six men I left the fort, and after a good deal of difficulty reached this place one beautiful afternoon and formed our camp on yon little rise of ground right above the town.

Our first business was to put up log houses, as we intended remaining here all winter. This was done in less than no time, for my men were great with the ax. We then cut timber, and fell to work hewing it for the framework of the mill. The Indians gathered about us in great numbers. I employed about forty of them to assist us with the dam, which we put up in a kind of way in about four weeks.... I left for the fort [after] giving orders to Mr. Weimar to have a ditch cut through the bar

ditch. There was about a foot of water running then. I reached my hand down and picked it up; it made my heart thump, for I was certain it was gold. The piece was about half the size and of the shape of a pea. Then I saw another piece in the water. After taking it out I sat down and began to think right hard. I thought it was gold, and yet it did not seem to be of the right color: all the gold coin I had seen was of a reddish tinge; this looked more like brass. I recalled to mind all the



An 1852 photo of Sutter's Mill at Coloma, after it had been converted into living quarters. By then, thousands of miners – but neither Marshall nor Sutter – had profited from Marshall's discovery. The man in the foreground is believed to be Marshall. Image courtesy of the Bancroft Library.

in the rear of the mill, and after quitting work in the evening to raise the gate and let the water run all night, as it would assist us very much in deepening and widening the tail-race.

I returned in a few days, and found everything favorable, all the men being at work in the ditch. When the channel was opened it was my custom every evening to raise the gate and let the water wash out as much sand and gravel through the night as possible; and in the morning, while the men were getting breakfast, I would walk down, and, shutting off the water, look along the race and see what was to be done, so that I might tell Mr. Weimar, who had charge of the Indians, at what particular point to set them to work for the day. As I was the only millwright present, all of my time was employed upon the framework and machinery.

One morning in January—it was a dear, cold morning; I shall never forget that morning—as I was taking my usual walk along the race after shutting off the water, my eye was caught with the glimpse of something shining in the bottom of the

metals I had ever seen or heard of, but I could find none that resembled this.

Suddenly the idea flashed across my mind that it might be iron pyrites. I trembled to think of it! This question could soon be determined. Putting one of the pieces on a hard river stone, I took another and commenced hammering it. It was soft, and didn't break: it therefore must be gold, but largely mixed with some other metal, very likely silver; for pure gold, I thought, would certainly have a brighter color.

When I returned to our cabin for breakfast I showed the two pieces to my men. They were all a good deal excited, and had they not thought that the gold only existed in small quantities they would have abandoned everything and left me to finish my job alone. However, to satisfy them, I told them that as soon as we had the mill finished we would devote a week or two to gold hunting and see what we could make out of it.

While we were working in the race after this discovery we always kept a sharp lookout, and in the course of three or four days we had

picked up about three ounces—our work still progressing as lively as ever, for none of us imagined at that time that the whole country was sowed with gold.

In about a week's time after the discovery I had to take another trip to the fort; and, to gain what information I could respecting the real value of the metal, took all that we had collected with me and showed it to Mr. Sutter, who at once declared it was gold, but thought with me that it was greatly mixed with some other metal. It puzzled us a good deal to hit upon the means of telling the exact quantity of gold contained in the alloy; however, we at last stumbled on an old American encyclopedia, where we saw the specific gravity of all the metals, and rules given to find the quantity of each in a given bulk.

After hunting over the whole fort and borrowing from some of the men, we got three dollars and a half in silver, and with a small pair of scales we soon ciphered it out that there was no silver nor copper in the gold, but that it was entirely pure.

This fact being ascertained, we thought it our best policy to keep it as quiet as possible till we should have finished our mill. But there was a great number of disbanded Mormon soldiers in and about the fort, and when they came to hear of it, why it just spread like wildfire, and soon the whole country was in a bustle. I had scarcely arrived at the mill again till several persons appeared with pans, shovels, and hoes, and those that had not iron picks had wooden ones, all anxious to fall to work and dig up our mill; but this we would not permit. As fast as one party disappeared another would arrive, and sometimes I had the greatest kind of trouble to get rid of them. I sent them all off in different directions, telling them about such and such places, where I was certain there was plenty of gold if they would only take the trouble of looking for it. At that time I never imagined that the gold was so abundant. I told them to go to such and such places, because it appeared that they would dig nowhere but in such places as I pointed out, and I believe such was their confidence in me that they would have dug on the very top of yon mountain if I had told them to do so.

The second place where gold was discovered was in a gulch near the Mountaineer House, on the road to Sacramento. The third place was on a bar on the South Fork of the American River a little above the junction of the Middle and South forks. The diggings at Hangtown [now Placerville] were

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

FOCUS OF READING AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration will be the central book in a series of California Sesquicentennial reading and discussion groups that the Council is sponsoring over the next three years. Look for an announcement in the next issue of this newsletter for the locations and dates of those groups. The anthology has also been selected as the official companion book to the PBS special "The Gold Rush," which will air nationally on January 20, 1998.

The three brief excerpts offered here barely hint at the extraordinary medley of voices presented in the anthology – or the remarkable variety of experiences, perspectives and backgrounds of the individuals who were brought together by James Marshall's discovery of gold in 1848. The introductory notes (in italics) are by the anthology's editor, Michael Kowalewski.

discovered next by myself, for we all went out for a while as soon as our job was finished. The Indians next discovered the diggings at Kelsey's and thus in a very short time we discovered that the whole country was but one bed of gold. So there, stranger, is the entire history of the gold discovery in California—a discovery that hasn't as yet been of much benefit to me.

LETTER TO FREDERICK DOUGLASS

JAMES R. STARKEY

In 1849 the eastern abolitionist press trumpeted the opportunities available to African-Americans in California, where the hard work of mining supposedly tempered racial hatred. California entered the Union as a free state in 1850, following a long tradition of Mexican antislavery sentiment in the region. But enforcement was weak and southern slaveholders found regions where slavery openly flourished. The California Fugitive Slave Law, passed in 1852, made fleeing from masters illegal within the state's supposedly free borders. Free blacks from the east, along with the few slaves who managed to buy their own freedom, lived under a constant threat of arrest.

James R. Starkey, a former slave who bought his freedom in North Carolina, came to San Francisco via Nicaragua in 1852. He hoped to raise enough money to buy the freedom of his son and daughter in the east, but never succeeded. He stayed in California and founded the San Francisco Athenaeum Institute (a library and debating society for working-class African-Americans) with Mifflin Wistar Gibbs and other prominent African-American leaders. During his sea voyage to California via Nicaragua, he wrote occasional letters to Frederick Douglass that were printed in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

SAN JUAN DE NICARAGUA,
GRAY TOWN, FEB. 26, 1852

Mr. Editor—Sir—I left New York on the 3d of Jan., in the Bark Pocahontas, in company with another gentleman and his wife, from Buffalo, to this place. We took passage in this vessel, because we thought (and being assured by the owners) that

accommodations would be much better for us than on one of the Steamers, which are generally so crowded.

But how mistaken were we, after leaving New York; for the Captain, whom I understand, is a Virginian, would not admit us to the cabin of the vessel with the other passengers, who were of the very lowest class, although *we paid the same fare*. The sailors were made to leave their berths, and take our previous secured births in the cabin, and we to take theirs. He would not admit us to table until the other passengers and even the sailors had taken their meals. It is needless for me to say that this most unjust distinction was made simply on account of the tincture of the skin.

But at last, we arrived in the port of San Juan, the famous port of Promethean notoriety: and when he learned that we intended to stop at this place, I at once discovered quite a change in his manners toward us.—I suppose he thought as I did, that I should be able to meet him on equal grounds here. But even in this, I was mistaken: for this place, a town containing five hundred inhabitants, of which one hundred are white Americans, and the other four hundred, which are composed of Indians and colored persons from the American States, suffer themselves to be ruled at the will and pleasure of the few pale faces who come among them only to benefit their pockets. Out of the eight hotels in this place, five are kept by colored persons from the States: and among them, are some of the best houses in town.

And imagine my surprise, when I saw, a few days ago, a

colored young man on his way home from California, in the company with a number of white companions; they had seen many a hard day together, in the Mountains of California; he was well-dressed, and the best looking man, not only in the company but in the house; when the dinner bell rang, he, of course, seated himself at the table, having previously bought his ticket at the bar, and paid as much for it as

anybody. I say, imagine my surprise, when I saw the landlord (colored) walk up to him and take him by the collar, and say to him, in a loud and insulting tone, "I thought, by your appearance, that you had sense enough to know the American character better than to seat yourself at my first table." For this, he (the landlord) received quite a merited rebuke, not only from the colored young man, but also the "American characters" who were at the table

manifested their disapprobation at his course. The young man, and those in company with him, left the house, and went to a hotel kept by a white man, and were entertained alike, without distinction.

It is very strange that our people will suffer themselves to be carried away by this "American character," even here, in a country like this, whose king is a colored man, and the police officers, colored men.... And with this colored government, colored persons from the States seek to enforce what they call the "American character," but more justly the slaveholding character, on their own color who come among them. Is it not time we had begun to open our eyes, and see the folly of our own doings?

Is it not time that we had begun to appreciate freedom and real liberty, particularly in a country like this?

Yours respectfully,
James R. Starkey

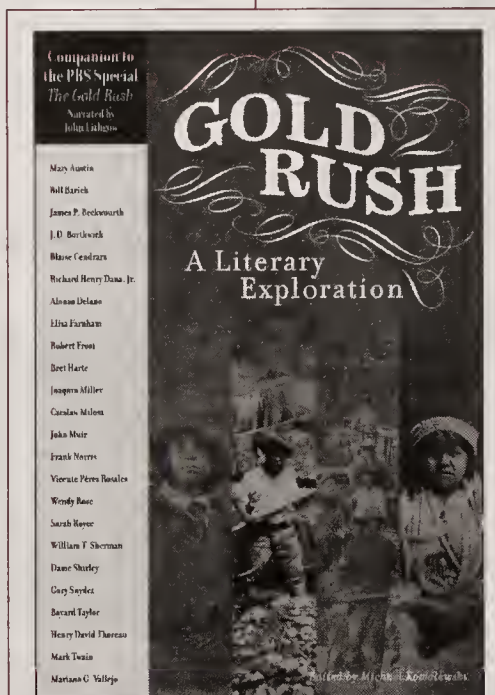
from THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was born in Boston and studied divinity at Harvard. He became an ordained Unitarian minister before suffering a crisis of faith in 1831. As a lecturer, essayist, and editor he led the New England transcendentalist movement in questioning traditional religion and literature. He was an important influence on a generation of thinkers and authors that included Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. *The Conduct of Life* was published in 1860.

I DO NOT THINK very respectfully of the designs or the doings of the people who went to California in 1849. It was a rush and a scramble of needy adventurers, and, in the western country, a general jail delivery of all the rowdies of the rivers. Some of them went with honest purposes, some with very bad ones, and all of them with the very commonplace wish to find a short way to wealth. But nature watches over all, and turns this malfeasance to good. California gets peopled and subdued, civilized in this immoral way, and on this fiction a real prosperity is rooted and grown. 'Tis a decoy-duck; 'tis tubs thrown to amuse the whale; but real ducks, and whales that yield oil, are caught. And out of Sabine rapes, and out of robbers' forays, real Romes and their heroisms come in fulness of time.

In America the geography is sublime, but the men are not: the inventions are excellent, but the inventors one is sometimes ashamed of. The agencies by which events so grand as the opening of California, of Texas, of Oregon, and the junction of the two oceans, are effected, are paltry,—coarse selfishness, fraud and conspiracy; and most of the great results of history are brought about by discreditable means.



Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration is published in conjunction with the Council's "Rediscovering California at 150" initiative. The anthology will soon be available at your favorite bookstore. Or you can order it directly from Heyday Books, PO Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709, tel. 510/549-3564; email: heyday@heydaybooks.com. Single copies cost \$20 (includes tax). Please add \$3 shipping for the first book and 50 cents for each additional book.

THE TENTH ANNUAL CALIFORNIA STUDIES CONFERENCE: FEBRUARY 5 -7, 1998

"CALIFORNIA 1848-1998: 150 YEARS SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD AND THE U.S.-MEXICAN WAR"

The Council is joining with the University of Southern California and the California Studies Association to sponsor California Studies Conference X. This public conference will commemorate and consider anew the legacy and significance of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war between Mexico and the United States, and the discovery of gold in California. The conference will also explore such related issues as globalization, immigration, economic development and the experiences of indigenous peoples of the Americas. We invite you to attend this international gathering of writers, scholars, journalists, policy makers and interested citizens to help us reconsider our past and its impact on the present and future.

Most conference activities will be held at the Davidson Conference Center of the University of Southern California, near the intersection of the Santa Monica Freeway and the Harbor Freeway in Los Angeles.

The conference program includes the following tours, lectures, panels, and events:

Thursday Session February 5



In a free History Alive! chautauqua presentation on Thursday, Feb. 5, scholar Dan Lewis will portray Mariano Vallejo. Photograph of Vallejo courtesy of the Bancroft Library.

- Chautauquan Performance: Mariano Vallejo. This free public program is a sample from the Council's History Alive! chautauqua program.
- 150 Years After: Cultural Renewal in Native California.
- A Curse of Tea and Potatoes: The Life and Recipes of Encarnación Pinedo.

- Labor Organizing and College Campuses.
- Latino Politics and Public Identity: Negotiating Citizenship in Southern California.
- The California Sesquicentennial Banquet – A special event featuring addresses by Jorge Castañeda and Kevin Starr. At Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel.

Friday Session February 6



The "Redescubriendo Nuestra Historia. Rediscovering the History of Mexican Los Angeles" field session on Friday Feb. 6 offers a tour of historical and cultural sites of Mexican Los Angeles. Photo by Frank Thomas

- Redescubriendo Nuestra Historia. Rediscovering the History of Mexican Los Angeles: A Regional Field Session.
- The California Sesquicentennial: Who Should Care and Why? This free public discussion program features addresses from Council executive director James Quay, Mary Ryan, Paul Apodaca, Kevin Starr, and Jorge Castañeda.
- Picturing Gold: The Art and Photography of the California Gold Rush.
- Chautauquan Performance: Biddy Mason. This free public program is a sample from the Council's History Alive! chautauqua program.
- Women in Competing Cultures: 1848-1998.
- California Jackpot?: The Past and Future of Legal Gambling in California.
- The New California Environmentalism after 500 Years of Resource Use

- The "New Yellow Peril": Asian-Americans and the Campaign Fund-Raising Controversy.
- Free Trade and the Environment in Mexico and the U.S: The NAFTA Side Agreements and Beyond.
- Community Based Art Making Groups.
- First Annual Carey McWilliams Lecture: R. Jeffrey Lustig, founder of the California Studies Association. A Special Event.
- Los Angeles and Mexico City: Transnational Experiences. This program at Self-Help Graphics features Rubén Martínez, Alex Cox, Paolo Gasparini, and Jérôme Monnet. A Special Event.

Saturday Session



The "Citrus Gold" field session on Saturday Feb. 7 offers a tour and exploration of the historical, economic and cultural significance of citrus farming in southern California.

February 7

- Citrus Gold: A Regional Field Session.
- Land, Liberty, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
- Strengthening Community in California: Theory and Practice.
- Sugar Cube Missions: What do Fourth Graders Know about California History and Why Do They Know It?
- Visual Histories: Images that Shape our Knowledge of the Past.
- Reconstituting California's Public Life.
- L.A. Real-History as Performance.

- Onward and Upward for Mexican Workers?: Analyses of Socioeconomic Status Trends.
- Crossing Borders-Building Alliances: Labor Organizing in California's Multicultural Past and Present.
- "The U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848." Paul Espinosa presents a Sneak-Preview of his Documentary intended for PBS. Post-Screening Commentators include William Deverell, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Lisbeth Haas, and Jesús Velasco-Márquez. A Special Event.



The Council-funded film documentary "The U.S. - Mexican War, 1846-1848" is part of a binational effort to examine the historical, social and cultural forces of the war and its continuing impact on our lives today. The film will be screened in a special sneak preview on Saturday Feb. 7. Photo courtesy of Special Collections Division, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, Arlington, Texas.

From More Information

For further information or to obtain a conference registration form, contact Anne Marie Kooistra, program coordinator, University of Southern California, History Department, Los Angeles 90089-0034. Phone: 213/740-1669; email: kooistra@usc.edu.

HISTORY ALIVE! CHAUTAUQUA GRANTS AVAILABLE

As part of its "Rediscovering California at 150" Sesquicentennial initiative, the Council is creating the History Alive! chautauqua program and is offering a limited number of grants to nonprofit organizations throughout the state to bring these dynamic, historical performances to their communities.

History Alive! features dramatic, historically accurate portrayals of some of the most important and fascinating characters of the California Gold Rush era. A chautauqua performance (modeled after the rousing educational tent assemblies of 19th century America) encourages audience members to engage directly with these historical personalities and with the historians and scholars who portray them.

The Council's History Alive! chautauqua grant program will make two types of grants available beginning in January 1998. The History Alive! performance grant (\$300) supports a single public appearance by a chautauqua character. The Mini-residency chautauqua grant (\$500) supports a series of presentations by a single chautauquan over a two-day period; these presentations include: a) a major public presentation at a community site, b) a performance at a local school, and c) an appearance before a local civic organization. All programs must be presented free of charge to the public.

Currently, the Council can award only one grant in each California Assembly district during the duration of the "Rediscovering California at 150" Sesquicentennial initiative (1998 - 2000). Applications are due by the first working day of each month and at least eight weeks before the proposed performance.

To find out more about the History Alive! chautauqua grant program and/or to receive a application form, please contact the Council office nearest you.

History Alive! Chautauqua Characters

Here are descriptions of the History Alive! chautauqua figures currently under development. A final determination of the characters available for the series will be made by late December.

Juana Briones. One of the most prominent women in early California, and one of most successful in the American period. Juana Briones grew up as the daughter of the commandante of the Presidio at San Francisco and, with her husband, was one of the first civilians settled in the colony of Yerba Buena. Her success on her own as a businesswoman, landowner, rancher and humanitarian was unusual for a woman of those times. She was also one of the few Californio landowners who successfully fought for her land grants, in what are now San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa

Clara counties, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Yee Fung Cheung. A famous herb doctor who came from China in 1850 to care for Chinese miners and others. Yee Fung probably prospected for gold before giving it up to practice what he knew best - herbal medicine. He set up his first herb shop in Chinese Camp in Fiddletown. Later he also set up offices in Virginia City, Nevada (during the silver strike) and in Sacramento. Dr. Yee was joined in his practice by his second son, T. Wah Hing. Both effected many famous cures and took care of the sick of all races and nationalities.

Antonio Garra. A Cupeño Indian, Garra was the leader of the 1851 Indian Tax Revolt in southern California against the United States for the same reasons that inspired the American colonialists to revolt against England - no taxation without representation. He also fought for Indian rights to due process in the judicial system. He lost his struggle and his life in the cause.

José Jesus. A Siakumne Indian of the Central Valley Yokuts, Jesus was an alcalde (mayor or leader) at Mission San Jose, who after secularization, returned to the Central Valley and became a leader of his people. During the California period, he earned himself a reputation as "the Christian horse thief." During the Mexican-American War he was contracted by Sutter to fight alongside his Indian brethren as soldiers in Captain John Frémont's Company "H" of the California battalion. After the war he was hired by Charles Webber and Associates to contract Indian labor of the Stockton Mining Company, which opened up almost all of the southern mines.

William Leidesdorff was a native of the Virgin Islands whose father was a Danish planter and whose mother was Black. He went to San Francisco in 1841 in command of an American schooner after making a fortune in New Orleans as a cotton broker. In San Francisco he built the City Hotel and a large warehouse and acquired 35,000 acres of land on the American River. He was appointed the vice-consul under Thomas Larkin. He launched the first steam vessel on the San Francisco Bay. A small downtown San Francisco street is named for him.

Biddy Mason. An African American woman prominent in the early urban history of Los Angeles. Her story exemplifies how Californians struggled with issues of slavery in the 1850s. Arriving in Southern California as a slave in 1851, she later won her freedom and became a midwife and nurse, a philanthropist, and organizer of the First African American Methodist Episcopal Church of Los Angeles.

Pio Pico. Pico was born at the Presidio of Santa Barbara of Spanish, Italian, Indian and African ancestry. Both as a politician and as an entrepreneur he espoused the views of many native-born "Californios" over directives from distant seats of government. As the last Mexican governor of California, he presided over the secularization of the missions and turned over their vast landholdings to private hands and moved the capital of California from Monterey to Los Angeles. Although he fled California during the American takeover, he returned to build the first major hotel in Los Angeles and serve on the City Council. By the time of his death, Pico had lost everything.



Mary Ellen Pleasant

Mary Ellen Pleasant. Civil rights activist and philanthropist known as the "Mother of Civil Rights" in California because of her work in saving runaway slaves, and winning a civil rights case in court. She funneled some of the wealth she earned in real estate and running several boardinghouses in San Francisco during the Gold Rush into her philanthropic and civil rights activities. She fought to secure justice for "colored" citizens in general, and ex-slaves in particular in California.

Sarah Royce. She came as an infant from England to New York. In 1849 she and her husband embarked for California, bringing along their two-year-old daughter. Royce's detailed memoir of that crossing is one of a very few written by a woman. She and her husband settled in Grass Valley and raised four children, among them the noted philosopher Josiah Royce. She subsequently lived in other California communities and was a vital force in shaping educational and religious institutions wherever she lived. Her life in California spanned a 42-year period, ending with her death in San Jose in 1891.

Dame Shirley. Using the pen name Dame Shirley, Louise Amelia Smith Clappe was the first acclaimed literary figure in the state's history, earning that status as the chronicler of life in the mining camps at the height of the Gold Rush. Coming to California from New England with her husband, who practiced as a doctor in the Sierra gold mining camps, she described the rugged life and the conflict among the

diverse cultural groups with clarity and insight in a series of 23 letters written to her sister between 1851-52 and later published in the *Pioneer*, San Francisco's leading literary magazine of the time. She greatly influenced writers Bret Harte and Mark Twain.



John Sutter

John Sutter. An emigre from Switzerland who came to California to establish his "New Helvetia" in the land of opportunity. A man with vision and organization, Sutter built an economically thriving outpost of Anglo-American settlement in Mexican California based on livestock and lumber using Native American labor. The discovery of gold at a mill owned by Sutter launched the "rush" for gold that ultimately led to his undoing, ruining him financially as the mass of humanity tramped through his lands on their rush to the gold fields.

Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. Vallejo held both military and civil authority over a vast area of Northern California during the Mexican period. He maintained a local military force, and was acknowledged by foreign merchants, visiting dignitaries and citizens as the representative of the Mexican government. His land grants at one time included most of what are now Marin, Sonoma, Napa and Solano counties. Although imprisoned by Americans during the Bear Flag Rebellion, he later participated in drafting the new state Constitution, acting as a negotiator and translator, later serving as a state senator. While he lost most of his property during the American period, he retained enough land to sell Mare Island to the U.S. and to offer the town of Benicia as the new state capital.

Camillo Ynitia. The last chief of the Coastal Miwok village of Olompali, he was one of the handful of Native Californians who successfully traversed three diverse cultures. Born into the traditional Miwok world, he adapted to the Spanish world, experienced the Californio/Mexican world, and witnessed the entrance of the American world into California. Considered a *gente de razon* (a person of reason) during the Mexican period, he was a compadre of Vallejo, who helped him acquire Rancho Olompali. He outwitted Capt. John C. Frémont and survived the Bear Flag Revolt.

FALL Calendar

Most of the public humanities programs listed on these two pages were either created or supported by the California Council for the Humanities. Please note that dates and times should be confirmed with the local sponsors. These listings are often provided to CCH well before final arrangements are made.

Please also check the monthly calendar listings on the Council's world wide web pages at <http://www.calhum.org/>.

EXHIBITS



From "Diamonds in the Rough." The Fresno Bee snapped this photo at an exhibition game with Fresno's local team before a sell-out crowd of 6,000. It was the year the New York Yankees dominated the major leagues, sweeping the Pittsburgh Pirates in the World Series. Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs. Shown in the photo, left to right: Johnny Nakagawa, Lou Gehrig, Kenichi Zenimura, Babe Ruth, Fred Yokshikawa, and Harvey Iwata. Fireman's Park, Fresno, 1927. Courtesy of Kerry Yo Nakagawa, Nisei Baseball Research Project.

Thru Nov. 9 "Diamonds in the Rough: Japanese Americans in Baseball" is a traveling exhibit of rare photographs, personal artifacts, and historical documents about Japanese American participation in baseball. At the Herbst International Exhibition Hall, Presidio of San Francisco, (open Wednesdays thru Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.). Call 415/431-5007 for more information.

Thru Nov. 14 "Juana Briones: Her Life and Times" is an exhibit about Juana Briones (1802-1889), one of the most successful women in early California history and one of the few Californio landowners who fought for her land rights all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. At the San Francisco Public Library, Larkin & Grove Streets. 415/433-3026.

Thru Nov. 15 "Preserving Our Queer Culture(s): The Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California" is a series of concurrent exhibits held at four sites in Northern California: The Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center (S.F. Public Library), UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and The Gay & Lesbian Historical Society (GLHS). Some exhibits will focus on: Feminist and Lesbian culture in the early 1970's, activist Jose Sarria, The Black Cat bar, Playwright Robert Chesley, and the San Francisco Imperial Court system. 415/777-5576.

Thru Nov. 16 "Photography and the Old West" is a CERA-sponsored exhibition of historical photographs by 19th and 20th century photographers, many of whom came west to record official government geographical and geological explorations and, later, the development of the railroads and other commercial enterprises. Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County, 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City. 916/741-7141.



Photographs like William Henry Jackson's image of the high bridge in the Colorado Central Railroad Georgetown Loop are in the "Photography in the Old West" exhibit. Photo courtesy of Peter E. Palmquist.

Thru Dec. 7 "Produce for Victory: Posters on the Homefront, 1941-1945" is a SITES exhibit of patriotic posters. The exhibit examines the history and effect on production of these efforts to increase industrial and agricultural output during World War II. Presentation in Palm Springs is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Palm Springs Air Museum, 745 N. Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs. 760/778-6262.

Thru Dec. 22 "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and The United States Constitution" is a traveling exhibition that tells the story of Japanese Americans who suffered injustice at the hands of their government and who have struggled over the years to correct that injustice. It also examines the impact of a period when racial prejudice and fear upset the delicate balance between the rights of the citizen and the power of the state. This presentation in Los Angeles is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. At the College Libraries, University of California, Los Angeles.

Thru May 1, 1998 "Hidden Labor: Uncovering L.A.'s Garment Industry" is a mixed-media installation in nine display windows of a former department store focusing on the history of Los Angeles' garment industry and its workers. Open 24 hours. West 7th Street between Grand and Hope, Los Angeles. 310/967-5122.

Nov. 3 - Nov. 21 "MOTHEREAD: A Celebration of National Literacy Month" is an exhibit of art work, stories, and videos that low-income, Los Angeles parents and children have created in this unique reading program. At the Los Angeles County Office of Education Gallery, 9300 Imperial Highway, Downey. 213/623-5993.

TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT!



From the "Produce for Victory" exhibit. The 1942 "Together We Can Do It" poster is from the Oldsmobile Division of General Motors Corp. Photo by Richard Strauss, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.



From the "Gold Fever" exhibition. "Thomas Drew, Forty-Niner", c. 1852, sixth-plate daguerreotype. Photographer unknown. From the collection of the Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco. Courtesy of the Oakland Museum.

Jan. 24 - Jul. 26, 1998 **"GOLD FEVER! The Lure and Legacy of the California Gold Rush"** is a multidisciplinary exhibition of more than 1,000 artifacts, a theatrical audio guide, film footage, and a reconstructed archeological dig that examines the explosive impact of the Gold Rush on California's economy, population, environment and cultural diversity. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St, Oakland. 510/238-2200.

Jan. 24, 1998 - Jan. 24, 2001 **"Impact of the Gold Rush on Native Americans"** is a multi-faceted exhibit documenting how Native American communities responded to changes brought about by the large influx of prospectors to regions previously untouched by immigration. The exhibit will also explore the impact of the Gold Rush on present-day native populations. California State Indian Museum, 2618 K Street, Sacramento. 916/324-7405.

Jan. 30, 1998 **"Walking Ancient Pathways"** is a bilingual exhibit that illustrates the history of northern Baja California and southern California's native peoples and their cultures. Using a variety of media as well as an interactive area, the exhibit explores the archeological, ethnographic, historic, and folkloric elements of cultures dating back several thousand years. At the Maturango Museum, Ridgecrest.

E V E N T S

Nov. 1 **"Women's Role in the 1933 L.A. Garment Strike"** is a lecture, discussion, and tour with CSU, Dominguez Hills Professor Myrna Donahue that will explore the role of Latina women in the garment strike that changed the face of organized labor in Los Angeles. In English and Spanish. 10:30 a.m. to noon. West 7th Street and Grand Avenue, Los Angeles. 310/967-5122.

Nov. 1 The **"Symposium on Play and Ritual in African Art"** is a day-long program featuring a nationally renowned panel of scholars, art historians, and anthropologists who will explore the intersection of play and ritual in African art as well as in art of the African diaspora. 9 a.m. At Lenart Auditorium, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. 310/206-5663.

Nov. 4 **"The City of Los Angeles in the Fiction of Walter Mosley."** This interdisciplinary seminar will discuss the work of mystery writer Walter Mosley and will feature scholarly presentations on the musical, architectural, and literary aspects present in his fiction. Mosley will also attend and discuss his writing and his new book *Always Outgunned, Always Outnumbered*. 5:30 to 8:30. Campus Center Lounge, Pasadena City College, 1570 E. Colorado Blvd. Pasadena. 626/585-7653.

Nov. 12 **CCH Proposal-Writing Workshop in San Diego.** This grant workshop is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required. Please also request and read the *Guide to the Grant Program* before attending. 10 a.m. 2560 Orion Way, Carlsbad. 619/232-4020.

Nov. 20 **CCH Proposal-Writing Workshop in Los Angeles.** This grant workshop is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required. Please also request and read the *Guide to the Grant Program* before attending. 6:30 p.m. CCH Los Angeles office, 315 W. Ninth Street, Suite 702. 213/623-5993.

From "Herbert's Hippopotamus." Herbert Marcuse and his student Angela Davis speaking at a rally on Revelle Plaza, UC San Diego in October 1969. Photo by Reverend John Huber, courtesy of Paul Alexander Juutilainen.



Dec. 2 The CCH-funded documentary film **"Herbert's Hippopotamus: A Story about Revolution in Paradise,"** which depicts the San Diego years of Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse, will be screened, followed by a discussion with filmmaker Alexander Juutilainen. 7:30 p.m. Pacific Film Archives, 2625 Durant, Berkeley. 510/642-1412.

Dec. 4 **"Mildred Howard and the Art of the African Diaspora"** is a lecture by Dr. Lizzetta LaFalle-Collins on the work of African American artist Howard and her investigations of black culture and ancestry. 7 p.m. Berkeley Art Center, 1275 Walnut Street, Berkeley. Please call 510/644-6893 for more information.



From "Isn't S/He A Doll." Dolls made by the Bamun peoples of Cameroon. The "Play and Ritual in African Art" symposium examines themes and issues of this exhibit. Photo by Denis Nervig, courtesy of the Fowler Museum.



From "The Gold Rush." Three men and a woman - a rare sight during the height of the California Gold Rush - digging for gold at the Auburn Ravine in 1852. Photo courtesy of the California State Library.

Jan. 20, 1998 **"The Gold Rush,"** a documentary film about the California Gold Rush, narrated by John Lithgow, will be air on PBS. This historical documentary traces the westward migration and the quest for fortune that profoundly changed California and the rest of the nation. Check your local listings for broadcast times.

Jan. 24, 1998 The first day of the **"Gold Fever! Symposium,"** associated with the opening of the exhibit at the Oakland Museum, features a keynote address by historian J.S. Holliday, as well as two panel discussions and lectures by history professors Malcolm Rohrbaugh and Patricia Limerick. The Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. 510/238-2200.

Jan 25, 1998 The second day of the **"Gold Fever! Symposium,"** associated with the opening of the exhibit at the Oakland Museum, features lectures by historian Richard White and Kevin Starr, California State Librarian, historian and author. Two additional panel discussions are also planned. The Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. 510/238-2200.



From the "Gold Fever" exhibition. "Mountain Jack and a Wandering Miner," c. 1850, oil on canvas. By E. Hall Martin. From the collection of the Oakland Museum of California.

Feb. 5 - 7, 1998 **"California 1848-1998: 150 Years Since the Discovery of Gold and the U.S.-Mexican War"** is the tenth annual California Studies Conference. It will focus on legacies and impacts of the U.S.-Mexican War and the California Gold Rush, including issues of globalization, immigration, economics, culture, and politics. Most events take place on at the Davidson Convention Center at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. 213/740-1669; e-mail to Anne Marie Kooistra at kooistra@usc.edu.

HUMANITIES AS POLITICS IN THE REAL WORLD *Continued*

lic environment I had regularly heard and uttered anti-Semitic comments and, although I thought I knew no Jews, I harbored no positive sentiments for those whom I had been taught had killed Christ. Now my father was telling me he belonged to that same band of mythic transgressors. My father!

The die was cast. I proceeded to learn everything I could about religion – the most neglected field of the humanities – and to debate with him at every opportunity the relative merits and ultimate truths of our respective faiths. As he was neither a fool nor one to patronize, our discussions – often fierce arguments – became my training ground in the nuances of theology and later in the wonders of philosophy. These Oedipal debates, and the effort I was forced to put into them as preparation – for what I then believed was the sake of my soul and his – convinced me to pursue a scholarly life. And with the tools I armed myself with to meet his challenges, I ultimately managed to succeed at it in my own way.

To Converse With Anyone

I was driven to leave no aspect of the humanities unexplored, and some areas I studied with a passion just this side of obsession: first it was years of theology, then years of philosophy and mathematics, then came Latin and French, followed by rhetoric and law, and lastly – when the concerns of the late 1960s and early 1970s began to encroach on my own affairs – I turned to history and anthropology. Mine has been a medieval education: theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and law. And it was precisely this brand of education, shamelessly informed by the treasures of Western culture and driven by the ideologies behind its civilizational imperatives, that permitted me – a Chicano from San Jose's east side – to converse with anyone, to lay claim to any intellectual terrain, to feel, despite my height, no smaller than anyone around me. The humanities empowered me then; they continue to empower me now.

Today, like the humanities themselves, my life is at the crossroads where academia and the so-called "real world" intersect. The allure of the boardroom and the excitement of the marketplace are powerful pulls today, even for a lifelong academic like myself. For some of my students the pull is even greater. I have heard a number of them argue it is difficult to justify their cloistered graduate-school life, with the expectation of a tight or non-existent future market for their skills, when outside their window they can see many of their peers already making more money in this booming economy than they could ever dream of making for themselves.

Every day one can read stories in the major newspapers and magazines on how the arts, museums, and other cultural institutions are being deeply affected and sometimes totally transformed by the

I am concerned with humanities that empower collectively by permitting one to speak with anyone knowingly about everything.

changes taking place in the marketplace. Profits drive stock prices and tax revenues, and stock prices and taxes drive both the size of endowments and the budgets of cultural institutions. Without these resources the humanities seem to have no alternative but to wither into insignificance or to recede to the elite corners where many would like to keep them confined. Unfortunately, in the United States the humanities are also under siege in the academy. Not only have the number of majors declined precipitously, but those most in need of the humanities' capacity to embolden through its language and ideas, have ubiquitously attacked them as the racist, misogynist, and homophobic products of "dead white males." As I am sure it is clear to you, I am not speaking this morning about the popular watered down version of the humanities as mere painting, song, dance, ritual, or literature *whatever the merits* as long as the provenance is politically correct. No. That vision of the humanities can certainly mobilize and give collective pride to those who associate with it, but it is not the politicizing vision that concerns me now. My focus here is on that powerful vision of the humanities that too many SOBs – supporters of the Symphonies, Operas, and Ballets – think should be theirs alone. I am concerned with the humanities that empower collectively – by permitting one to speak with anyone knowingly about everything – and individually, by helping one to see what the pieces are, where they come from, why they're there, how they fit into each other, what they mean, and what they are likely to portend. That knowledge of the humanities, free to escape from self-referential eddies, is the one I connect with politics in the real world. And I know I'm not alone in this.

Humanities L-i-t-e

In the September issue of *Harper's*, currently at your favorite newsstand, two articles appear whose timing with the theme of this conference, "creating humanities futures," is hardly coincidental. This conference and their subject matter are driven by similar preoccupations.

The first essay, written by Professor Mark Edmondson, who earlier this summer treated us to a piece in *The New York Times Magazine* (13 July 1997) that wisely spelled out what

our age is missing in dismissing Freud as a "scientifically challenged misogynist," analyzes the widespread transformation of liberal education into "lite entertainment for bored college students." He argues that many students today (perhaps most) share a consumerist worldview forged by the consumerist climate that envelops them. This *Weltanschauung*, he claims, leaves them "ever more devoted to consumption and entertainment," and to "the using and using up of goods and images" thereby leaving them incapable of "indict[ing] the exigencies of capitalism" that limit their freedom of expression and shorten their vision. The "pervading view," then "is the cool consumer perspective, where passion and strong admiration are forbidden." But that is not all that gets left out. As I have witnessed on many occasions, this location is also a place where "the Socratic method – the animated, sometimes impolite give-and-take between student and teacher – seems too jagged for [their] sensibilities" as they "are intimidated in class [and filled with 'dread'] at the thought of being embarrassed in front of the group." As the *Wall Street Journal* in a front page story this past week (4 September 1997) also noted, colleges faced with this condition ply the students, prior to their arrival "with luscious ads, guaranteeing them a cross between summer camp and lotusland." And once there, "flattery and nonstop entertainment are available if that's what they want." "A world [like this] uninterested in genius," Edmondson wryly laments, "is a despondent place, whose sad denizens drift from coffee bar to Prozac dispensary, unfired by ideals and the glowing image of what one might become." This, then, is the circumstance provoked by the absence of the humane education I am speaking about.

This insightful veteran of many years in the trenches of the seminar room and lecture hall suggests that "the aim of a good liberal-arts education was once, to adapt an observation by the scholar Walter Jackson Bate, to see that 'we need not be the passive victims of what we deterministically call "circumstances" (social, cultural, or psychological),' but rather, by linking ourselves – through what Keats calls an 'immortal free-masonry' – with the great [of past and present], we can become freer – freer to be ourselves, to be what we most want and value." "We professors," he rightly concludes, "talk a lot about subversion, which generally means subverting the views of people who never hear us talk or read our work. But to subvert the views of our students, our customers, that would be something else again."

I have hardly done justice to this complex essay. But I will stop here, pausing only to observe that I have read nothing that so clearly expresses my far less eloquent thoughts at this point in my life. A point at which I find myself weighing abandoning the progressively more solipsistic world that academia

has become for me and many of my students for a life more open to connections to other worlds, and where my actions and thoughts can once again have tangible if at times frightening consequences.

Earl Shorris and "Radical Humanism"

The second *Harper's* essay, penned by Earl Shorris, a dear friend of mine and my co-editor in a forthcoming Norton anthology, is more poignantly to the point of this morning's musings. It poses a fundamental question: can a liberal education, based on the humanities, be used "as a weapon in the hands of the restless poor"? Or, put more descriptively, can you teach philosophy to poor people using Plato's allegory of the cave so that – as one of Shorris's students in a remarkable humanities class held in a New York prison stated – they can understand that the ghetto is the cave and education is the light?

Mr. Shorris's essay, abstracted from his brilliant forthcoming book, *New American Blues; A Journey Through Poverty to Democracy* (W.W. Norton), is an erudite and persuasively argued defense of the powerful role the humanities can play in the attempt to transform a person from an isolated entity – perhaps

The study of the humanities by large numbers of people, especially the poor, is in itself a redistribution of wealth.

encircled by what he calls a "surround of force" – into a political person; a person who, having the capacity to reflect, and therefore to choose, is autonomous enough to do politics instead of being done in by them by being forced either to "sink into passivity" or to futilely "react to force with force."

Shorris's piece is marvelously unexpected. Rather than engaging us in another hopeless exercise in PCism, he presents us with a genuinely informed and admirably balanced argument on behalf of "radical humanism." This is a humanism aware of the pitfalls presented by the Right's appropriation of the humanities, which he correctly understands to include a good measure of disdain – as seen in the late Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* – for the democratization of their distribution beyond the circle of the elite – those anointed by birth, education, class, or mere wealth to be the keepers of the best that has been said and thought. And it is a humanism aware of the Right's fear of the humanities'

capacity to unleash liberating forces whose consequences, such as those set in motion by the great humanist Dr. Martin Luther King, are hardly orderly and never predictable. Indeed "the idea of Protagoras as a teacher of the humanities [with his vision of humankind as the measure of all things, and] using critique as an avenue to the consideration of ethical questions, including politics, must be rejected by the fundamentalists [of the Right], because [their hero, Plato, in his dystopic manifesto, *The Republic*,] has labeled [as subversive] the poets" – those humanists, who like Socrates, wanted fiercely to engage in dialogue not mere prescription.

This radical humanism described by Shorris is also a humanism that the Left has largely abandoned, identifying its study with "the cultural imperialism of dead white European males." But our author's answer to this sad predicament is to argue that, "in fact, the humanities should belong to the left, for the study of the humanities by large numbers of people, especially the poor [and marginalized – those trapped in the surround of force] – is in itself a redistribution of the wealth." After all, "the division should come [as Prof. Edmundson had suggested] between market-driven culture and the humanities, not between the beauty of an Asian poem and one that is European." "When Petrarch called for a return to the classics, meaning the work of Greece and Rome, he knew no other. His notion of civic humanism would not include the study of bricklaying or popular culture now as it did not then. Nor would the humanities comprise the manufacture, programming, or repair of computers." "Petrarch would make world literature his text and find art influenced by Africa, Asia, and the Americas as interesting as the sculpture of Greece or the architecture of Rome. History, of course, has no limits and logic no substitute. The answers arrived at by philosophers differ from time to time and place to place, but the questions, as Kant set them out, have always been the same: What can I know? How shall I live? [What should I value? And] what may I hope?"

"[For as long as we can imagine,] the humanities will always be heavily influenced by the work of the dead white men of Europe, for they have been history's [biggest] troublemakers, the fomenters of revolutions and inventions, the impetus of change, the implacable enemies of the silence in which humanities [shorn of dialogue] perishes. No other great body of work invites criticism or denies loneliness to the same extent, and no other body of work in all the history of the world led to politics [for so many, for so long], with its still astonishing notion of autonomy. The left abandons the humanities at its peril, for without the humanities for a gadfly [and a source of solutions], the left sits idly, contented by memories of distant thoughts and small victories, and dies."

Empowerment, a sense of equality of opportunity and a capacity to find and use alternatives to violence, that's the result of a true political education, an education that teaches that the moral life does not consist – as some would have it – in being acted upon, but in acting.

The Clemente Course in the Humanities

Hoping to test his thesis, that you could teach the humanities to the poor to the benefit of their personal well-being and political empowerment, and inspired by Petrarch, Robert Maynard Hutchins (the president of the University of Chicago, who, believing that "the best education for the best is the best education for all" instituted the Great Books curriculum), and Viniece "Niece" Walker (who while serving her eighth year of a 25-year prison sentence at a maximum security prison for women, suggested to Shorris that the poor be taught the humanities in order to learn "reflective thinking" necessary for legitimate political behavior) in the Fall of 1995, Shorris created a program to teach humanities to those living in poverty. He approached Dr. Jaime Inclan, head of the Roberto Clemente Center, a community-based mental health facility on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Inclan offered classroom space for the course and thus the program came to be known as the Clemente Course in the Humanities.

A group of prestigious people (for example, Grace Glueck, art critic for the *New York Times*) volunteered to serve as faculty. Students were recruited with the help of a number of community organizations in New York City. There were three basic criteria for admission: individuals had to be between the ages of 17-35; they had to be living in households with incomes no higher than 150% of the Federal poverty guidelines; and they had to be capable of reading a daily tabloid newspaper in English. Later in the year Bard College offered a certificate of completion to any student completing the course and six college credits to students demonstrating a sufficiently high level of academic performance.

As a result, 31 individuals living in poverty were enrolled in a college-level course that exposed them to 110 hours of the humanities – to the works of some of the greatest thinkers, writers, and artists of all time. The program, which met two evenings a week from October through May, consisted of 11 two-hour classes in each of five different subjects: Moral Philosophy, Art History, Literature and Poetry, American History, and Logic. A

graduation ceremony was held at the completion of the course, at which the former Mayor of New York City, David Dinkins, gave the commencement address. Reflecting on his experience a year later, the former mayor noted: "the special nature and focus of the Clemente Course ... not only offers the means for young people to lift themselves materially from poverty, but it also offers them the chance to develop intellectually and spiritually. Students learn in an atmosphere of respect, with an emphasis on open, reasoned dialogue." Congressman Charles Rangel, ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, was equally supportive: "The Clemente Course," he wrote last April in telling prose, "clearly fills an important social need which ... is not met by any other program. It provides the poor with an opportunity to explore, study, learn from, and be enriched by some of the great cultural masterpieces of our tradition. It does so in an environment which places a high value on dialogue, reason and mutual respect. It opens up new possibilities of personal growth and it helps foster skills of critical analysis and self-expression while building self-esteem and elevating the level of aspiration for the participants." These comments are no small praise. And they had the facts behind them.

Of the 31 students enrolled, 17 completed the course. Of those, 14 performed at the high academic level necessary to receive the six college credits offered by Bard College. Twelve went on to college and one began the process of completing his G.E.D. to prepare for college this Fall. Three students were awarded full scholarships at Bard. As extensive testing bore out, for those who completed the Clemente Course, the experience was truly transformative. Not only did it open new avenues of study and enrichment, but it also helped the students develop and sharpen their powers of critical thinking, moral deliberation and sensitivity, literary and aesthetic perception, and written and oral expression. Their new knowledge and enhanced abilities, as could be hoped for, raised their level of aspiration, increased their sense of personal responsibility, and provided a new optimism about their future prospects.

Empowerment, a sense of equality of opportunity, and a capacity to

find and use alternatives to violence, that's the result of a true political education – an education that teaches that the moral life does not consist-as some would have it – in being acted upon, but in acting. Autonomous persons act. Politics here is not the holding on to a single idea, but the capacity to reflect and through reflection to consider more than one possibility. And politics here is also being used in the way the Athenian Pericles used it, "to mean activity with other people at every level, from the family to the neighborhood to the broader community to the [state] in which one lives." Rich people in our society know politics in that sense. Our poor and our students should also.

A "Right to Read"

I began teaching in 1971 in the Philosophy Department of San Jose State University. I had not been there more than a few weeks when a professor in the Humanities Department sought to recruit me for a "Right to Read" program he was putting together. For those unfamiliar with this gem of the War on Poverty, this was a program designed to do – more or less – what the Clemente Course did so well. I inquired about the source of my invitation among my colleagues in

Keep away from that nut. He's out to undo the university.

the Philosophy Department. They were uniformly skeptical about the merits of both the program and its director, but one of them was adamant: "Keep away from that nut, he is out to undo the university." I was hooked. I accepted the invitation immediately. I proceeded to spend the next two years teaching a comprehensive seminar three times a week on Western Culture and Civilization from the Pre-Socratics to Malcolm X. It was the best time I had in 26 years in the academy. We accepted only poor, marginally qualifiable Latinos. Most, like myself, were from San Jose's east side, some were returning dropouts, some returning teen-mothers, some – also like myself – former gang members. All, but I, were skeptical about the endeavor.

Nonetheless, we read, we argued, we got angry at each other, we manipulated each other and the college bureaucracy, we took trips to the theater, symphony, opera, ballet – most had never been to San Francisco, an hour's ride, none had seen spectacles such as these. And together we flourished. When the program ended and I left for the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1974, a half dozen transferred to UCSC and most of them ultimately graduated. The same for those who remained in San Jose.

Continued on page 10.

Humanities News

Two New Members Join the Council Board



Governor Pete Wilson has appointed **Nina Blanchard** of Studio City to the board of the California Council for the Humanities. Blanchard is best known as the founder of the Nina Blanchard Talent Agency and for launching the careers of such models and actors as Cheryl Tiegs, Rene Russo and Lindsay Wagner. Created in 1961, Blanchard's agency became the most recognized model agency outside of New York. Blanchard sold her company in 1995 to the Ford Model Agency and continues to be a consultant to them. She currently serves on the board of the Entertainment Industry Development Corporation and has been a member of Women in Film since its inception in 1973. She is the author of the novel *The Look*, an insider's account of fashion industry, and the nonfiction work *How to Break into Motion Pictures, Television, Commercials and Modeling*. Blanchard has taught for 18 years in the continuing education department at UCLA and lectures widely about the risks and rewards for women who want to run their own businesses.



Lucy L. Killea has been elected to the CCH board by the Council. Killea is president and CEO of the International Community Foundation of San Diego. Until November 1996, Killea was California state senator from the 39th Senate district. During her tenure in the legislature, Killea chaired the Finance, Investment, and International Trade committees and was associated with the creation of key pieces of legislation, including campaign reform and the open primary. Before election to the state Senate she served in the state Assembly and as a member of the San

Diego City Council. In the 1970s she was executive vice president of "Fronteras de las Californias," a local government, university and business project to expand joint efforts across Baja California and California. Killea currently serves on the boards of the Bank of Commerce, the Naturelands Project, the Detwiler Foundation, and the San Diego Dialogue at the University of California. She remains active in San Diego-area civic, political, and economic policy issues and maintains an abiding interest in the cultural and economic interdependence of the San Diego-Tijuana region. Killea holds a doctorate degree in Latin American history from UC San Diego.

Council Will Meet in Oakland in December

The California Council for the Humanities' quarterly meeting will be held in Oakland on Friday, December 12. The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. As this issue of the newsletter went to press, the final meeting location had not yet been determined. For additional information, please contact the Council's San Francisco office at 415/391-1474.

On the Council Website

www.calhum.org

If you haven't visited our website in a while, we invite you to take another look. We've already upgraded our Humanities Discussion Forum and the Crossing the Frontier Discussion site, and we'd be delighted to have you join these conversations. In addition, over the next three months we'll be adding new features and facts to our site. Here's a brief summary of what you'll find and how you can help us keep the site interesting and useful to you.

HUMANITIES DISCUSSIONS



❖ In the Forum (www.calhum.org/netforum/chd/a.cgi), we've just posted Professor Klor de Alva's article (see the front page of this newsletter) and would love to hear your reactions and opinions. To suggest additional discussion topics, send an email message to webmaster@calhum.org.

❖ You can also join our "Citizenship" e-mail discussion group by registering on the website. We'll be introducing new topics there in November and December.

CROSSING THE FRONTIER



The real-life exhibit of historical photographs of the developing West, created by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), moves to Tokyo this winter. Our award-winning exhibition website (www.calhum.org/sfmoma-crossing) continues to draw cheers and hisses from all over the world (check out the guestbooks in the online galleries). We've also improved the interface in the discussion area and posted some new essays; we hope you'll log in and add your own reactions.

CALENDAR



We've just overcome longstanding technical problems with our cultural calendars. Look for a detailed, updated calendar just after Thanksgiving.

SEND US YOUR FAVORITE CULTURAL URLS

We're updating our Resources page and we want the best in the West. Send your suggestions for the best cultural sites on the Net to webmaster@calhum.org. We'll give preference to California-related sites, but we'll consider them all for addition to our list of favorite websites.

CONTACT US.



You can use this web form to send us your comments and questions directly from the website. Let us know what you think.

COMING SOON

Within the next few months, you'll also find these additions to our website:

❖ CCH Grant guidelines. Instead of waiting for the mail, you'll be able to copy them from the website.

❖ "Rediscovering California at 150." We'll keep you up to date about the Council's California Sesquicentennial initiative. You'll find lots of ways to participate in this exploration of the meaning and impact of the events that led to the creation of modern California.

HUMANITIES AS POLITICS IN THE REAL WORLD *Continued*

Meanwhile, the wild-eyed visionary who led the program I was warned to avoid, left the university to found his own, the University of Phoenix, now the largest private university in the United States.

Thanks to our resident psychologist, Dr. Manuel Miranda, we also had our psychometric tests back then, lots of them. And the students also learned and became what the Clemente Course graduates knew and were at the end of their experiment in humanities as politics in the real world. Some became community leaders – and still are – others went on to lead professional and career-oriented lives. For me, this program became the benchmark against which every other academic experience I was to have had to compete. The results at this point? A mixed bag. It is impossible to duplicate in any other setting the

excitement of teaching the humanities to skeptical, world-weary youths whom one ultimately manages to touch. By the time I began teaching at Princeton the comparison was absurd, and in 1994, when I took up my appointment at Berkeley, the world Prof. Edmundson described in *Harper's* was too far entrenched to make the comparison realistic.

I want to close with two concluding remarks. First, in 1991 my father died at the age of 89 after converting to Catholicism. This change of heart also had a profound effect on me, but by then I am sure it was not due to the compelling nature of my nearly four decades of argument. He was a very political man and at such a critical moment he understood the alternatives and wisely chose as many as he could.

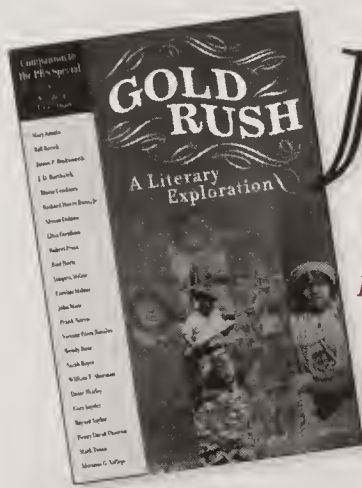
Second, by the middle of my second semester at Berkeley a group of concerned seniors, representing every U.S.-census approved ethnoracial community, came to my office to make what today would be considered a remarkable plea on any U.S. campus, but in Berkeley it represents nothing less than the dawn of the new millennium. Having pondered, on the basis of many of our class discussions, the merits of their soon to be awarded degrees, they politely informed me that since their majors had required almost no knowledge of Western culture and civilization (i.e., the humanities), they felt ill-equipped to go out into the world to transform it into *their* image. That being the case, would I be willing to teach a course on, say, "Western Culture for the Third World"? I said, "Yes, of course." My colleagues said, "Are you nuts?"

The end of the story must remain unwritten. I have been on leave from the academy for almost two years and have not yet decided whether I will ever go back. Please stay tuned. Till then, thank you.

Please Comment

We're interested in your responses to Dr. Klor de Alva's article. And we invite you to post your comments and queries in the Humanities Discussion Forum section of the CCH website. To go directly to the discussions, point your browser to <http://www.calhum.org/netforum/chd/a.cgi> and click on the title of this article. To post a response, click on the "New" button at the end of article and use the web form provided. We look forward to hearing from you.

Membership and Development News



Join the Council's *Rediscovering California at 150 Campaign* – with a gift of \$75 or more and receive a complimentary copy of *Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration*.

Rediscovering California at 150 is a dynamic, multidimensional initiative that will run from January 1998 through December 2000. With the help of our supporters, *Rediscovering California at 150* will offer Californians from Eureka to San Diego

important and compelling ways to examine and reflect upon our common heritage – *and its lasting legacy*.

Here are just a few of the things that supporters of the *Rediscovering California at 150* campaign are making possible:

❖ **The Gold Fever! traveling exhibit.** CCH has commissioned a 1,000-1,200 square foot exhibit that will travel to dozens of sites throughout the state between January 1998 and December 2000. The exhibit is designed to illustrate key themes of the Gold Rush: Who came to California, why they came and the lasting impact of their legacy.

❖ **The new anthology, *Gold Rush: A Literary Exploration*.** A joint project of the Council and Heyday Books in Berkeley, this exciting new book will be used as the basis for Council-sponsored reading and discussion groups throughout the state and will serve as the official companion to the PBS film, "Gold Rush."

❖ ***California History Alive! Chautauqua*.** Live solo performances of 12 dynamic historical figures that helped shape California before, during and after the discovery of gold will provide the focal point to community events throughout California.

Very importantly, these voices from early African-American, Asian, European, Latino and Native American California residents will help illustrate that our state is now – and has always been – a diverse and unique landscape.

To become a vital part of the Council's *Rediscovering California at 150* campaign, please send us your special gift today in the enclosed envelope, or call: **Julie Levak**, Director of Development at 415/391-1474.

A Time for Thanks

We gratefully acknowledge these individuals and organizations who contributed so generously – between January 7 and October 3, 1997 – to the Council's groundbreaking programs for *all* Californians.

Lisette L. Ackerberg
Janice M. Albert
Isabel Alegria
Sue and Frederick Allen
ARCO Foundation
Judith and Phil Auth
Rochelle Bachenheimer
Bakersfield California Foundation
Deanna D. Balantac
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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The humanities explore human histories, cultures, and values. They inform the conversations that are vital to a thriving democracy. They provide a context for people to understand one another. They constitute our most important human inheritance.

The purpose of the California Council for the Humanities is to create a state in which all Californians have lifelong access to this shared inheritance. The Council's mission is to lead in strengthening community life and fostering multicultural understanding throughout California, through programming which provides access to the texts and insights of the humanities council. It is an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and operates as a public-private partnership rather than a governmental agency.

From 1998 to 2000, the Council will encourage and develop compelling public programming commemorating the events that led to the founding of the state of California 150 years ago and examining the continuing impact of those events today. The Council's own California Sesquicentennial programs will include statewide chautauquo programs featuring in-person portrayals of major figures of the era; the creation of a Gold Rush onthology (published by Heyday Books) and statewide reading and discussion groups focusing on that onthology, a traveling Gold Rush museum exhibition with the Oakland Museum; and statewide conference focusing on key Sesquicentennial topics.

Council programs also include the California Exhibition Resources Alliance (CERA) which provides administrative support and a means for sharing exhibits among members of a network of smaller museums, and Motherhead, a family reading program in Los Angeles.

In addition, the Council conducts a competitive grants program. Since 1975, it has awarded more than \$13 million to over 2,000 non-profit organizations, enabling them to produce exhibits, film and radio programs, and lecture series and conferences on topics significant to California.

The Council is an independent, not-for-profit organization. It is supported by grants from NEH, corporations and foundations, and by contributions from individuals.

Major grant proposals are due on April 1 and October 1. Quick Grants - proposal planning grants, minigrants, film-and-speaker grants - are accepted on the first day of each month. Interested non-profit organizations should request a copy of the Guide to the Grant Program from the San Francisco office.

Page proofs for this publication were created on equipment donated by Apple Computer.

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NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: April 1, 1998

Proposals must conform to the 1997-1999 Guide to the Grant Program. Send 15 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

HUMANITIES

Fall 1997 • Volume 19 / Number 4

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